

Waterfront Connections

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Strategic Planning Office
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Major planning and development initiatives are shaping the future of Seattle's central waterfront. *Waterfront Connections* provides a glimpse of these initiatives and the opportunities we have to strengthen ties between Seattle and its waterfront.

Over the past decade, public and private investments have revitalized the waterfront. The Port of Seattle redeveloped underutilized properties that once served industrial and maritime needs of the city, bringing office and residential uses, a Cruise Ship terminal, a conference center, public boat moorage and a maritime museum to the central waterfront.

Today, the waterfront faces new challenges to provide access for these varied uses and preserve the regional transportation function of the Alaskan Way Viaduct. While transportation remains a vital waterfront function, the area is an increasingly important cultural and recreational resource. To meet the challenge of integrating these functions, the City is pursuing improved transit service and pedestrian connections, a comprehensive parking strategy for waterfront attractions, and improved access across the railroad tracks. In partnership with the Washington State Department of Transportation, the City is integrating these urban design concepts into the Alaskan Way Viaduct project.

The Seattle Art Museum, Seattle Aquarium Society and others are also engaged in projects aimed at improving the downtown waterfront. Recognizing the connections between these waterfront initiatives, public, private and community stakeholders have developed an informal partnership for waterfront stewardship and coordination.

Cruise ships at Bell Street Pier are a dramatic new presence on the downtown waterfront.



Waterfront Streetcar Improvements Project

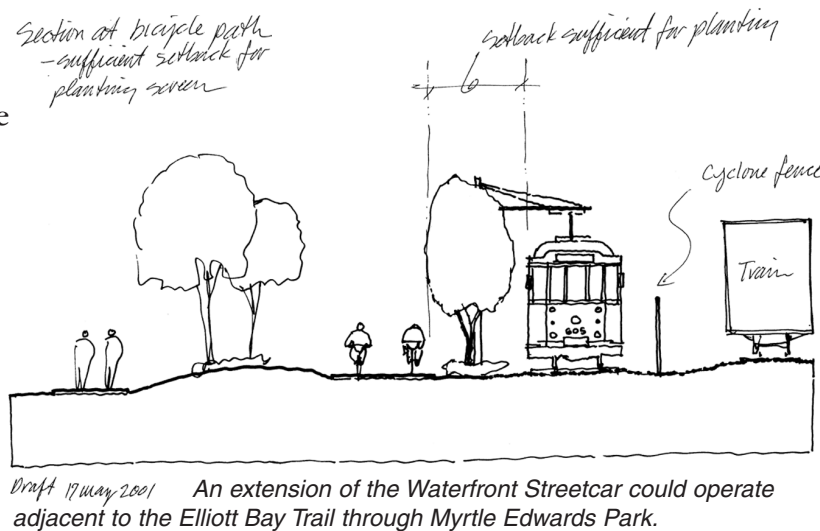
Tourists love Seattle's vintage Waterfront Streetcar but locals seldom use it for local commute trips because service is limited, with at least twenty minutes between each trip. However, the Streetcar has the advantage of operating in its own right-of-way (limiting delays from traffic congestion), and provides good connections to the Washington State Ferries system and to regional transit service at Union Station/King Street Station. With new office uses on the central and north waterfront, and extensive residential development of the adjacent Uptown, Belltown and Harbor Steps areas, could the Streetcar be improved to provide an important local transit connection?

The City of Seattle's Strategic Planning Office recently completed a feasibility analysis aimed at answering that question. The analysis looked at improving the Waterfront Streetcar by providing better transit service to the central waterfront and new service to the north waterfront/ Elliott Avenue corridor. Future extensions to Interbay and into the International District are also considered. This report summarizes the findings.

Project Goals

- Link Seattle's north waterfront area to regional transit services and downtown destinations with a convenient and attractive transportation alternative.
- Improve transit service to Seattle's central waterfront.
- Provide transit service that fits the scale and transportation network of these center city neighborhoods.

- Integrate this local service with existing and proposed citywide and regional services such as Metro, Sounder commuter rail, and monorail.
- Enhance an existing asset (the Waterfront Streetcar), make good use of proposed new facilities (Prospect and Thomas Street pedestrian bridges).
- Encourage continued development of the north waterfront area (including the Elliott Avenue W/South Interbay area).



Upgrading the Existing System

Increasing the frequency of streetcar service is a critical element of the proposed improvements. Upgrades to the existing system would make this possible. The Streetcar currently

runs on a single track for travel in both directions between Broad and Jackson streets, with "passing" tracks at three locations allowing one streetcar to pull to the side and allow a streetcar traveling in the other direction to pass. To provide more frequent service, several additional passing tracks could be provided on the central waterfront, allowing service as frequent as every ten minutes.

Conceptual Alternatives

With upgrades to the existing system, service could also be extended north to the Interbay area, south to the stadium area, and/or southeast into the International District (see extension options on area map, page 6). Analysis of an extension to Interbay shows ridership could increase by over one million passengers per year.

Alaskan Way Viaduct

Damage to the viaduct from the Nisqually earthquake in February 2001 underscored the seismic vulnerability of the Alaskan Way Viaduct (SR99) and created widespread recognition of the urgent need to retrofit or replace the structure. The 48-year old structure plays a critical role in the region's transportation system. Washington State Department of Transportation and the City of Seattle have joined to conduct an intensive and expedited study of options to either retrofit or replace the viaduct as soon as possible. The study results, including environmental impact information, will be used to make project decisions and begin preliminary design with an aggressive goal of entering a design-build RFP contract in the fall of 2003.

The Alaskan Way Viaduct carries significant traffic in and out of downtown Seattle and also serves as a major corridor for through-traffic. Built in 1953 with a capacity of 65,000 vehicles per day, the

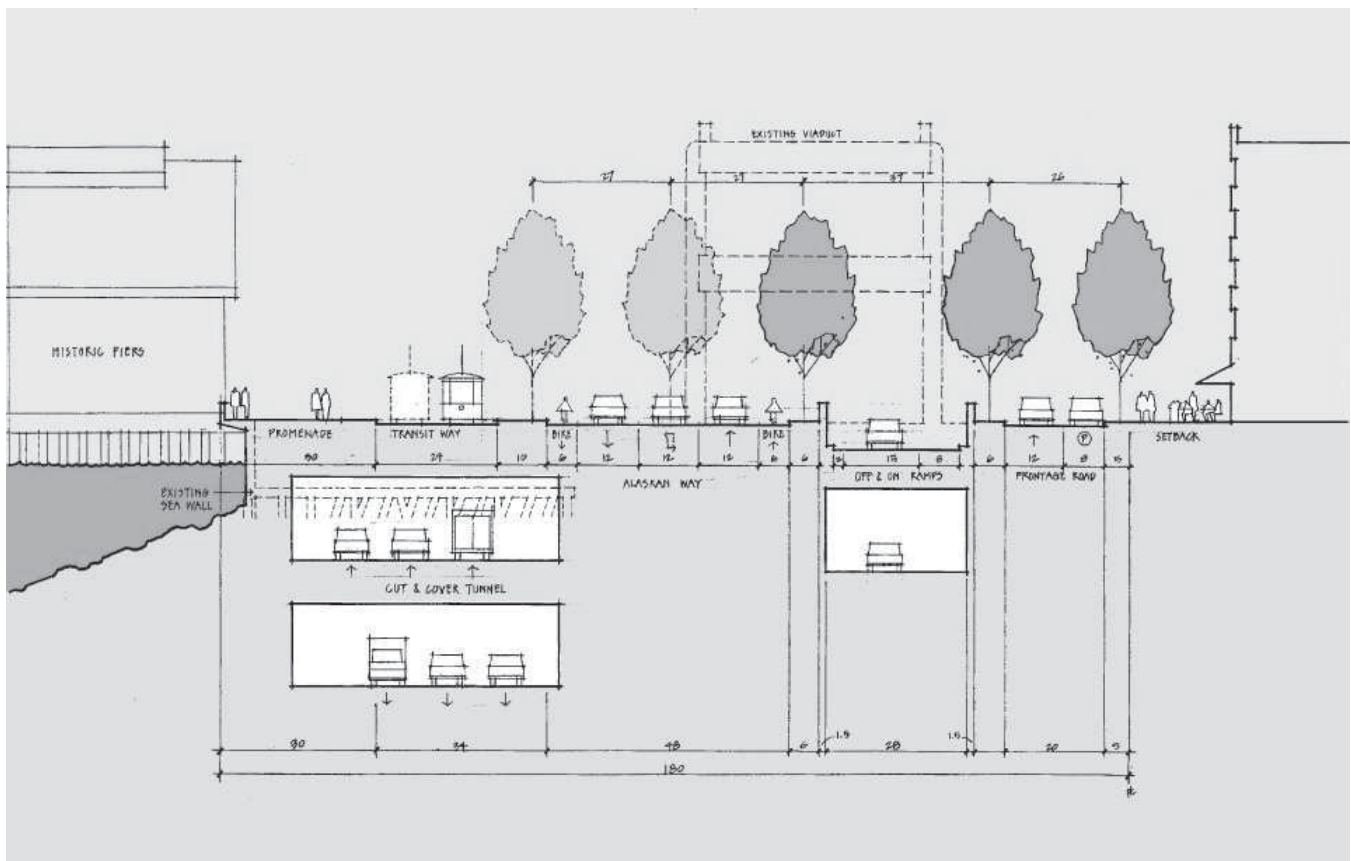
viaduct today carries up to 110,000 vehicles per day. That is almost a third of the volume of traffic on I-5, the other major corridor through downtown Seattle. Shippers and haulers, transit riders, and auto commuters all rely on the viaduct.

Also of concern is the relationship between the viaduct and the City of Seattle seawall area along the city waterfront; the seawall's condition could have an effect on how the viaduct program should be defined and carried out.

Current Alternatives

Before we can begin to replace the viaduct, we have to better define the range of feasible alternatives. WSDOT and the City of Seattle used the many ideas offered by the public to identify several promising conceptual alternatives.

The conceptual alternatives can be reviewed at www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/Viaduct/concepts.htm



Section view of Alaskan Way with the “Cut & Cover” concept for replacement of the Viaduct.

Parking Strategy

The Waterfront Parking Strategy evaluates waterfront parking conditions and recommends strategies for improving parking and access to major waterfront and upland uses - such as the Aquarium, Cruise Ships, the Olympic Sculpture Park and the Pike Place Market. Launched in response to community concerns about the impact of new and expanded waterfront attractions, the strategy was developed through a partnership between the City of Seattle Strategic Planning Office, the Seattle Aquarium, the Metropolitan Improvement District, the Pike Place Market Preservation & Development Authority, and the Port of Seattle.

A Partnership for Waterfront Parking Management

The principal recommendation is to form a partnership of entities with an important stake in waterfront parking to implement several parking strategies, phased in over time. The partnership would likely include the study partners, possibly other waterfront businesses and/or parking operators.

Strategies and Functions of the Partnership

The parking partners could manage the parking supply by:

- Implementing a coordinated pricing strategy emphasizing short-term parking at several featured waterfront parking facilities;
- Featuring these parking facilities and the pricing scheme in marketing materials produced by individual partners, and jointly producing marketing materials and advertising to promote the featured parking facilities.

- Improving the visibility and accessibility of the featured facilities through implementation of wayfinding improvements consistent with the City's Downtown Wayfinding conceptual plan. The look and feel of wayfinding improvements could be reflected in marketing materials and advertising.
- Advocating for and/or participating in the development of improved pedestrian facilities at strategic locations related to the featured parking facilities.



Improved signage would help visitors find their way to featured waterfront parking facilities.

- Advocating for and/or participating in the development of improved transit connections that would provide access to remote parking facilities that may be desirable destinations for waterfront visitors (e.g. retail core).
- Expanding the partnership to include future new facilities at strategic locations. Key site/project opportunities include the Olympic Sculpture Park, Pike Place Market PC-1 Site, and Alaskan Way Viaduct replacement parking site options such as the Spring and Western Block.

Pedestrian Connections

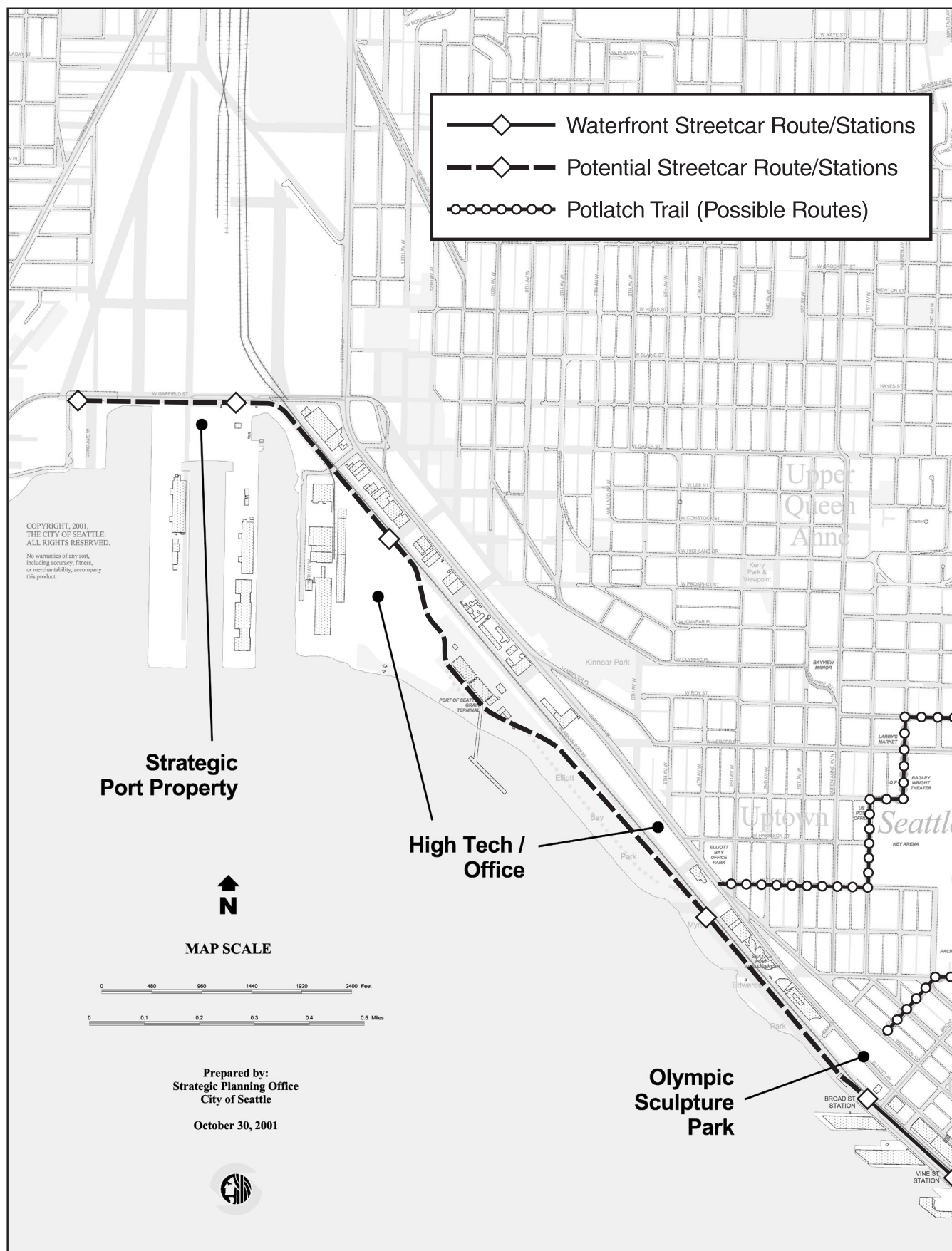
CityDesign, the City's office of urban design, has evaluated waterfront pedestrian connections as part of a broader Center City Open Space Strategy. The Strategy takes both a long-term (100-year) view of development of the Center City and recommends priorities to pursue in the next ten years to make significant progress toward this long-term vision. The major design concept of the center city strategy is a central "blue ring" that echoes the Olmsted Brothers "green ring" strategy created for the Seattle parks system in 1903. This inner ring would emphasize connections to water bodies and courses within the central city, as well as major cultural, recreational and historic assets of the center city.

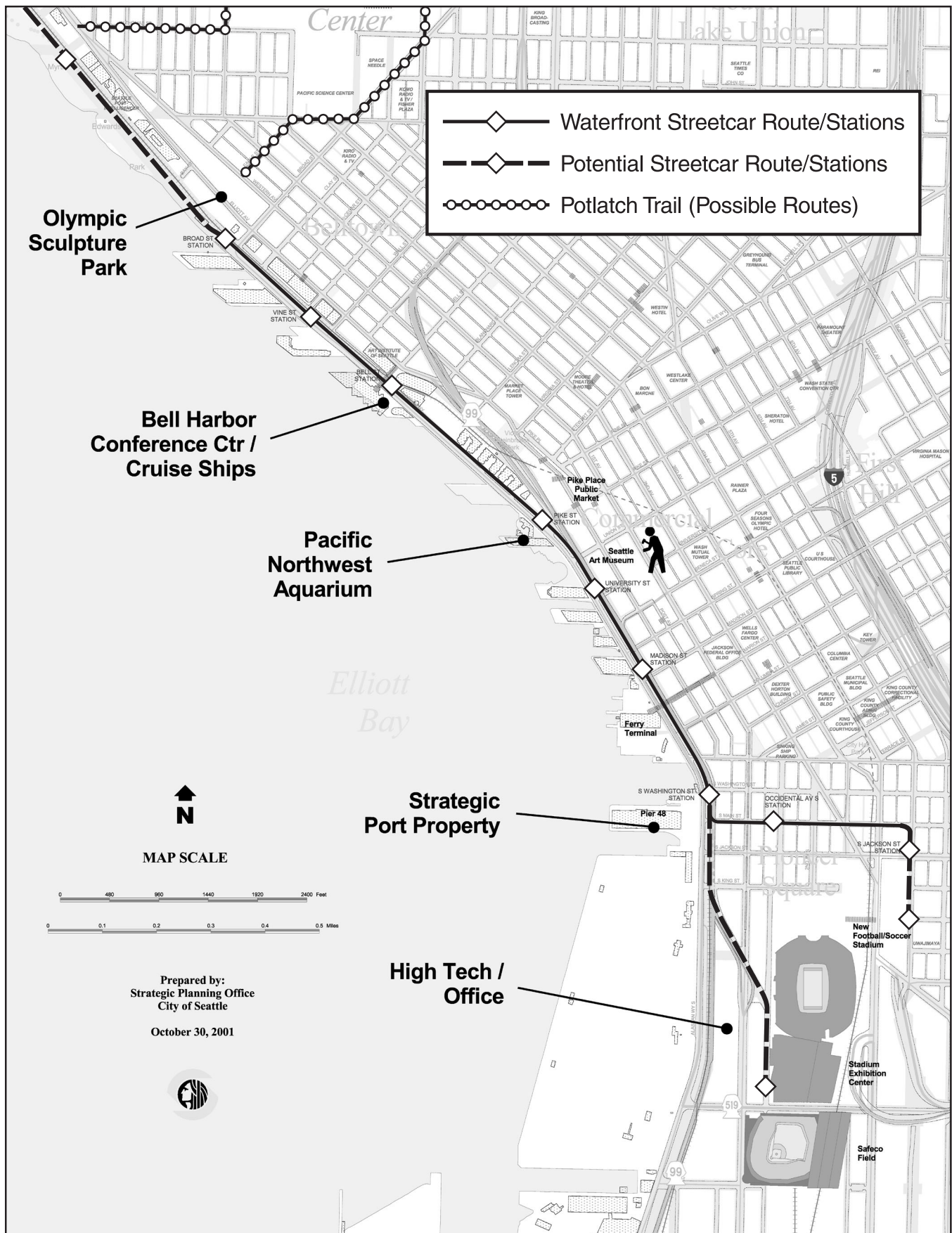


The downtown waterfront is a key component of the proposed ring of center city open space connections. (CityDesign/Mithun Architects+Planners)

The downtown waterfront is a critical component of the blue ring, and as such connections to the waterfront from all cross streets is important and should be improved over the next 100 years. Within the next 10 years, the recommended priorities for improved east-to-west waterfront access include connections at Thomas Street, at the Broad/Clay couplet (see page 9, North Waterfront Access), Pine Street, University Street, and Yesler to King streets in Pioneer Square.

For more information visit
www.cityofseattle.net/dclu/citydesign/





The Potlatch Trail

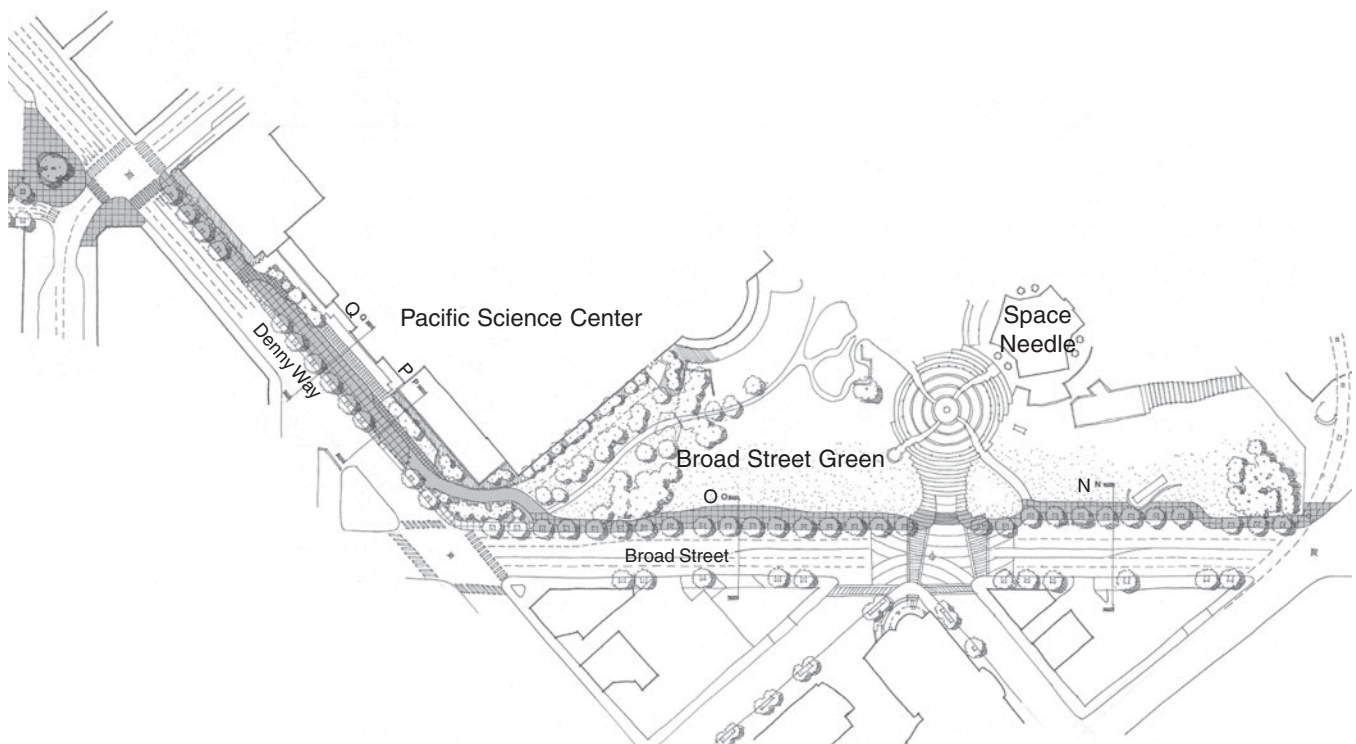
The Potlatch Trail is envisioned to be a new bicycle and pedestrian connection linking five of Seattle's spectacular open spaces: Elliott Bay, Myrtle Edwards Park, the Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle Center and South Lake Union.

The Potlatch Trail will be an urban walking event. Unlike the Burke Gilman Trail that has its own right-of-way, the Potlatch Trail will utilize both public and private sidewalks and spaces to create the trail width. People walking along the trail will cross streets at signalized intersections and walk along busy streets, as well as stroll along quiet streets and longer areas of richly planted avenues,

always aware of the urban fabric surrounding them. The trail will have a different urban feeling at different points. Consistent use of the Design Principles will unite the trail into a recognizable whole.

View the Concept Plan and Design Principles at:

www.cityofseattle.net/dclu/citydesign/DesignLeadership/Potlatch_Trail/Potlatch.htm



A segment of the proposed Potlatch Trail.

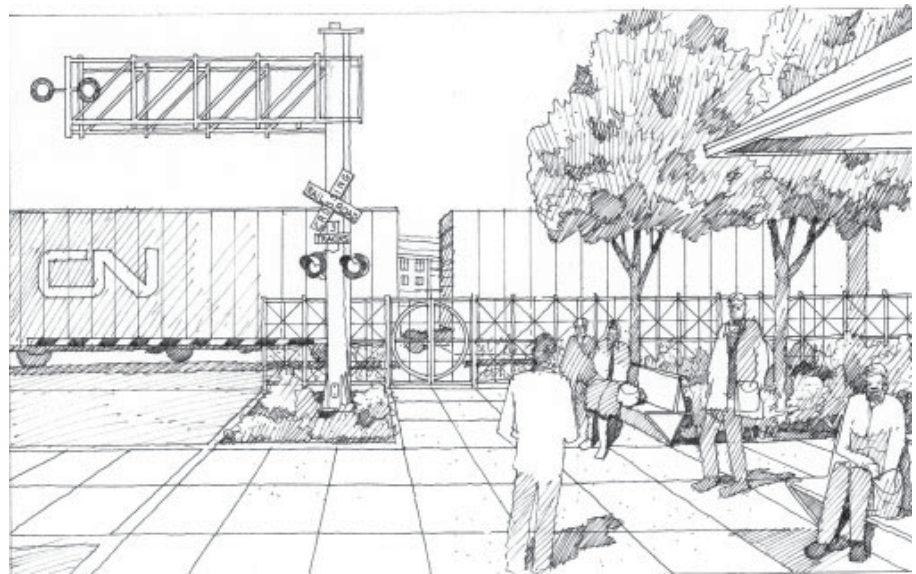
North Waterfront Access

The waterfront's historic transportation functions and present-day urban environment come together most dramatically at the intersection of Broad Street and Alaskan Way. Broad Street connects the waterfront, Seattle Center, the Mercer corridor and the Ballard/Interbay corridor. At Alaskan Way, traffic is subject to significant delays when trains block the intersection. The intersection is also an increasingly important environment for recreation, site of the future Olympic Sculpture Park (see page 10) and Potlatch Trail (page 8). From a regional perspective, Broad Street is viewed as a component of the "Fast Corridor" concept for improving freight mobility in the central Puget Sound region. (Fast Corridor is comprised of over \$350 M in grade separation and port access projects from Everett to Tacoma).

Seattle Transportation (Seatran) has addressed the complex transportation and urban design issues at Broad Street through the North Waterfront Access project. Seatran assessed the nature and magnitude of transportation conflicts at the Broad Street crossing of the BNSF rail line and engaged all stakeholders in an evaluation of the urban design and transportation issues in the north waterfront area.

vehicle traffic at Broad and Clay streets, a transit/taxi/drop-off zone on Elliott, improved safety devices, and/or a grade-separated pedestrian connection.

- Grade separation may become warranted in the future if rail traffic increases significantly.
- The preferred grade separation option is a vehicle underpass. The underpass could be accommodated as part of the Alaskan Way Viaduct project or as an independent project.



Clarifying pedestrian zones at railroad crossings can help to improve safety on the north waterfront. (Weinstein-Copeland Architects)

Key Findings

- Existing and immediately foreseeable conflicts are not of a magnitude that warrants bearing the cost and impact of a grade separation solution. Freight truck volumes on Alaskan Way are low.
- Existing conditions can be improved without vehicular grade separation. Possible improvements may include a one-way couplet for

Olympic Sculpture Park

In December of 1999 the Seattle Art Museum purchased the last remaining undeveloped property on Seattle's central waterfront as the setting for a new park dedicated to the exhibition of outdoor sculpture. In a 9-month period immediately preceding the land purchase, nearly \$30 million was raised from the private sector. These contributions provided for the purchase of a 7.4-acre property, the establishment of a permanent endowment fund for site management, and some funding for design and development of the park. In June 2001 the City of Seattle purchased an additional one-third acre site at the corner of Broad Street and Alaskan Way that had been slated for development of a twelve-story building. The Museum and King County contributed to the funding necessary for this acquisition. The City intends to include this final parcel as part of the park site. These property acquisitions ensured that Seattle would achieve a long-sought endeavor to protect open space in the heart of the city.



Aerial view of the Olympic Sculpture Park site and Downtown Seattle.

The Olympic Sculpture Park site is so named because it offers spectacular views of the Olympic Mountains and has the added benefit of being located adjacent to two public open spaces – an underutilized portion of the Alaskan Way street right-of-way and a city park, Myrtle Edwards Park. A design agreement between the Museum and the City outlines a framework for completing a conceptual design plan for the Olympic Sculpture Park and Alaskan Way and the new park's integration with Myrtle Edwards Park. Weiss/Manfredi Architects of New York was selected as the Lead Designer

for the park and public improvements after an extensive search process and public presentations by five finalists. Initial design concepts will be presented in early 2002.

View the park program at
www.SeattleArtMuseum.org.

Pacific Northwest Aquarium

The Seattle Aquarium Society (SEAS) is leading a master planning/design process for the new Pacific Northwest Aquarium. SEAS is a non-profit organization that has supported the Seattle Aquarium in fundraising, marketing and education since 1982.

SEAS has proposed an expanded new aquarium on the central waterfront to provide an improved platform for environmental and aquatic education as a major regional attraction, address major maintenance needs and flat attendance, and generate revenues to support continuous reinvestment in the aquarium.

The City endorsed the SEAS vision through adoption of a master plan in 1997 and a Memorandum of Understanding approved in April 2000. A conceptual design for the new aquarium on Piers 62 and 63 was presented in July 2000. In response to community concerns, the City and SEAS formed a Citizen's Advisory Committee to investigate siting options and has now recommended a new site incorporating the existing building at Pier 59 and the existing Waterfront Park south of Pier 59. A new waterfront park will be developed on Piers 62 and 63. A new design and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for this site are in development. SEAS goal is to begin construction by 2005 and open the Pacific Northwest Aquarium in 2008.

View more information at
www.seattleaquarium.org.

**the
seattle
aquarium**



Emerging Issues at Interbay

Nearly 200 acres of property in the Interbay area are vacant or underutilized and presents one of the most significant redevelopment opportunities in Seattle. The Port of Seattle's adopted Harbor Development Strategy calls for redevelopment of the Port's substantial holdings at Interbay. The Washington National Guard is pursuing relocation from its 25-acre Interbay armory site. Private developers have acquired most of the properties with frontage along 15th Avenue W and are pursuing redevelopment.

The area is part of the Ballard-Interbay-North End Manufacturing and Industrial Center, designated in the City's Comprehensive Plan. The current zoning is consistent with this designation, allowing a limited amount of commercial development.

Access to the underutilized properties is a significant challenge but could be improved as part of a new Magnolia bridge connection and with new transit investments proposed for the area including the Monorail and the Waterfront Streetcar extension.



The Port of Seattle identifies its Terminal 91 property as a candidate for redevelopment in the Harbor Development Strategy.

Seattle Waterfront Milestones

- Seattle developed as a trading city, with Elliott Bay and the Great Northern Railroad providing the vital links for trade. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the central waterfront was a maritime environment with an industrial character.
- The existing seawall was built in the early 1930s, creating Alaskan Way and increasing pedestrian and auto access to the waterfront.
- In the 1970s, Seattle made two significant investments in waterfront recreational opportunities—the Seattle Aquarium and Waterfront Park on the central waterfront and Myrtle Edwards Park to the north. Several piers were privately redeveloped for tourist-oriented retail/restaurant uses.
- In the 1980s, Seattle developed a Harborfront Public Improvement Plan for the 1.5-mile area along Alaskan Way between Pier 48 and Myrtle Edwards Park.
- In 1986, The City and Burlington Northern Railroad reached an agreement on relocation of railroad operations away from the central waterfront south of Bell Street. The City also leased a rail line from Burlington Northern for re-use as the Waterfront Streetcar line.
- In the 1990s, redevelopment of the Port of Seattle's central waterfront properties dramatically transformed the waterfront environment. The improvements include private development of office, residential and hotel uses on upland waterfront parcels and Port development of a cruise ship terminal, conference center, public moorage and new Port headquarters on the water side.
- Most recently, the growth of the high-technology sector in Seattle has created demand for large office sites with urban amenities. Several waterfront-area buildings and properties have been converted to high-technology sector uses. These firm location decisions are expanding our notion of the central waterfront both north and south of the historic center.

Public Involvement

To supplement the public involvement opportunities associated with individual waterfront projects, the City of Seattle's Strategic Planning Office convenes monthly meetings of the **Waterfront Stakeholders Group**. The group is comprised of neighborhood representatives, public agencies, property and business owners and institutions with an interest in the waterfront. The monthly meetings provide a forum for information sharing and coordination, and are typically supplemented by additional small-group meetings for problem solving and coordination.

Contact Information

For more information about Waterfront Connections or the Waterfront Stakeholders Group, please contact the Strategic Planning Office:

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